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Many counselors feel they are inadequately trained to work effectively with the analysis and remediation of pupil learning and behavior problems. Therefore, the present study was aimed at three tasks (1) identification of pupil learning, behavior, and adjustment problems for which teachers feel they need new remedial strategies; (2) the presentation of a rationale for utilizing behavior change strategies; and (3) testing of three strategies for working with representative teacher identified problems. Through a questionnaire, pupil problems were identified and categorized into three basic categories: (1) misbehavior, (2) learning, and (3) personal-social. Strategies for working with representative sample problems were developed from research and theory. Change in behavior will most likely occur when the distance between what the child wants and what he has is greatest. Steps are given for the counselor to follow in consulting with teachers. Strategies for treatment are presented in three case studies. The remediation techniques employed in the cases were designed to extinguish "undesirable" behaviors and replace them with productive modes of functioning. (KJ/Author)

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COUNSELING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: TECHNIQUES AND PROPOSALS*

by

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I. Problem:

During the past ten years, research activity in child study has undergone a general expansion with little effort being directed toward translating these research findings into improved educational practice. Development of ideal research-practice linkage models involving dialogue between researcher and practitioner on the identification and solution of pupil learning and behavior problems has not occurred (Guba, 1965). Rather, the opposite situation prevails. Volumes of child study research, some of which are of questionable quality as well as being non-cumulative and non-communicative, have not made an impact on the methodologies utilized by counselors and teachers for working with individual pupil problems. Counselor education programs are notorious for their course offerings in measurement, informational service, guidance program development, counseling theory, and loosely supervised practicums. Consequently, counselors feel they are inadequately trained to work effectively with the analysis and remediation of pupil learning and behavior problems (Bartlett and Thompson, 1969; and Peters and Thompson, 1968).

Therefore, the present study was directed toward three principal tasks: (1) The identification of pupil learning, behavior, and adjustment problems for which teachers feel they need new remediation strategies; (2) the presentation of a rationale for utilizing behavior change strategies; and (3) the testing of three strategies for working with representative teacher-identified problems.

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II. Method:

Five-hundred elementary school teachers were interviewed on the question, "What are your most troublesome pupil problems for which you would like to have couselor assistance?" The teachers were requested to state each problem in specific behavioral terms as in the following example: "Harold becomes involved in at least two fights per day with the boys in his class."

The problem statements were printed on 3 x 5 cards and classified into the three general categories of learning, misbehavior, and personal-social adjustment. Within each category, the frequency rate for specific problems was tabulated. Strategies for working with representative sample problems were developed from research and theory, emphasizing behavior change through (1) evaluation of present behavior patterns, (2) consideration of possible alternate behaviors, and (3) commitment to testing alternate behaviors.

III. Findings:

A. Pupil Problems Identified by the Elementary School Teachers.

The five-hundred elementary school teachers identified in specific terms 1452 pupil problems about which they would like to have couselor consultation. The student problems ranged from various disruptive classroom behaviors to such revenge-directed behaviors as stealing and destruction of property. The cards on which the problems were printed were sorted into three general categories: misbehavior, learning, and personal-social. While some of the problems could be classified in more than one of the three categories, an attempt was made to classify the problem according to the particular behavior which was causing the teacher most concern. For example, Sam's constant disruptive classroom behavior took precedence over the fact that he was not completing his written assignments. In all probability, the two problems were related and could be resolved together, but for classification purposes the card was placed in the

misbehavior category.

Each of the three problem categories was broken down into sub-categories. The misbehavior category, numbering 509 pupil problems, was sub-divided into the following behaviors: (1) Disruptive behaviors (e.g. whispering, talking, whistling, nudging, pinching, hitting, throwing objects, loss of self-control); (2) Aggressive behaviors (e.g. bullying, fighting, scuffling, antagonizing, destroying property); (3) Dishonest behaviors (e.g. cheating, lying, stealing); (4) Disrespectful behaviors (e.g. using abusive language, threatening of teacher, failing to comply with teacher requests).

The learning category, numbering 409 pupil problems, was sub-divided into the following: (1) Lack of skill and/or information (e.g. not knowing multiplication facts or not being able to recognize letters and their phonetic relationship in words); (2) Poor study techniques (e.g. poor or imcomplete homework papers and class assignments, inattention in class, time-wasting); (3) Underachievement (e.g. performance in class not up to expected potential or past performance); (4) Low motivation (e.g. lack of interest, low level of aspiration).

The personal-social category, numbering 534 pupil problems, was sub-divided into the following: (1) Conflict with self and/or others (e.g. with teachers, peers, family, or with self over particular problems involving guilt or decisions); (2) Personal appearance (e g. personal hygiene): (3) Offensive social behavior (e.g. attempts to dominate peers, plays tattle-tale role, infringes on others' rights, does not share or cooperate); (4) Withdrawal behavior (e.g. never lets his presence be know, literally "hides out" in the classroom).

Pupil problem types are listed in Table I with frequencies recorded for each sub-problem category.

TABLE I

Pupil Problems Listed by Elementary School Teachers

Problem Category		Frequency
I. Misbehavior		
1. Disruptive		287
2. Aggressive		116
3. Dishonest		63
4. Disrespectful		43
	Total	509
II. Learning		
1. Lack of skill and/or information		177
2. Poor study technique		119
3. Low motivation		79
4. Underachievement		34
	Total	409
III. Personal-Social		
1. Conflict with self and/or others		311
2. Offensive social behavior		163
3. Personal appearance		37
4. Withdrawal behavior		23
	Total	534

B. A Rationale for Working with Pupil Problems.

The strategies for working with the pupil problems discussed in the present paper were based on principles derived from the human needs theories of Maslow (1954) and Murray (1938) and from the behavioral modification models of Bandura (1961), Bijou and Baer (1961), Krasner and Ullmann (1967), Ullman and Krasner (1965), and Dreikurs (1968). The following rationale was established from the theories listed above.

All children have certain needs they are trying to meet. Some of these needs are well-defined while others exert a more general influence on behavior. Needs cause tensions which a child continuously tries to reduce. Usually children find "acceptable" behaviors for meeting most of their needs. Some children, however, are not successful in meeting their needs with "acceptable" behaviors and turn to "unacceptable" behaviors which they feel will satisfy these needs. If we assume that children, like their adult counterparts, are meeting their needs in the best way they know how, then we must conclude that new learning or relearning must occur if "unacceptable" behavior is to be rejected in favor of "acceptable" behavior. Change in behavior will most likely occur when the distance between what the child wants and what he has is greatest. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the child's behavior in both descriptive and value terms. For example, we have to look at what Sam is doing, what he gets for doing it, and how it helps him fulfill a particular need.

Murray (1938) and Maslow (1954) have postulated human needs theories which provide a basis for studying child behavior. However, Murray's (1938) classic list of 20 human needs, while being complete, is a rather cumbersome tool with which to examine child behavior patterns. Several of Murray's needs, in addition to being negative in nature, tend to overlap as do aggression and dominance. Maslow's (1954) six level hierarchy of needs (physiological, safety, belongingness, love, self-esteem, and self actualization) provides a more positive, workable framework within which to examine need-fulfilling behavior. When physiological and safety needs are fulfilled, perhaps Maslow's list could be further reduced to the two basic personal needs of feeling self-worth and having someone who cares.

Children exhibiting the behavior problems listed by the teachers are probably coming up short on feelings of self-worth and feelings that someone really cares about them. Therefore, once a particular need is identified with the behavior the child is using to meet that need, an alternate strategy can be planned to assist the child in his behavior change.

In consulting with teachers, the counselor should give attention to the following steps:

(1) The teacher should be able to spell out to the counselor the child's "unacceptable" behavior in clear-cut behavioral terms: "Sam disrupts my class five times daily with his 'speaking out';" not, "Sam is a discipline problem, would you talk to him?" Frequently, the teacher is <u>not</u> able to describe exactly what it is Sam is doing, let alone the frequency with which he does it. In these cases it is well to have the teacher observe Sam closely and

keep a record of his behavior for a few days. There have been several instances where such a minor shift in the teacher's role has corrected the child's behavior. Perhaps the child senses that someone cares enough about him to give him a little attention.

(2) Ask yourself what Sam's behavior is getting him. What need is he trying to fulfill? What is the payoff? Adlerian psychologists have proposed four goals of misbehavior (Dreikurs, 1961) which coincide nicely with some of the negative human needs listed by Murray (1938). These are (1) attention getting (exhibitionism), (2) revenge (aggression), (3) power (dominance), and (4) displaying inadequacy (abasement). Determine Sam's goals of misbehavior.

(3) Make sure that Sam's misbehavior is no longer rewarded with the accustomed teacher responses. Now, several alternatives may be planned. Sam's misbehavior can be countered with just the opposite effect that he has been receiving. For example, if Sam's misbehavior goal is attention getting, he could be "rewarded" with isolation. The opposite effect should then be followed by offering Sam a positive way to gain attention such as small group leadership responsibility for something in which he is interested or skilled. One "Sam" was given the responsibility of assisting interested students in learning his hobby of putting together plastic car models.

C. <u>Strategies for Treating Representative Pupil Problems</u>.

The representative pupil-problem cases presented for each of the three problem areas were researched cooperatively by the University of Tennessee and the Knoxville area elementary schools.

Case No. 1:

Jimmy Fox was a fourth-grade boy who was an incessant attention-getter. His parents and teachers felt that all avenues of assistance had been exhausted. He had been under psychiatric care for one year and when that failed, the school and family resorted to paddling. If anything, his disruptive classroom behavior became more frequent. After two years of failure, both the school and parents were ready to try anything. The counselor began by spending the first week observing Jimmy in the classroom for two 40-minute periods per day. She observed that Jimmy was disrupting the class approximately five times during each 80 minute observation period. Following each disruptive instance, the teacher stopped teaching, turned her total attention to Jimmy, dropped her hands, stomped her heavy shoe on the wooden floor and screamed in a fit of rage, "Jimmy Fox, you turn around in your seat and shut up!" Jimmy's attention needs were being met! Negative attention is better than no attention at all. Therefore, it was decided that a proclamation type contract which would establish very clear behavior limits for both Jimmy and his teacher was needed.

The contract stated that when Jimmy disrupted the class with his talking, noise-making, leaving his seat, and scuffling, etc., the teacher would point to the door at which time Jimmy was to report to the counselor who would admit him to a "time out" room. Jimmy was to be alone, but he could read, study, sleep, or do whatever he chose so long as nobody was harmed or had his rights violated. The teacher would not stop her class, nor would she embarrass or nag Jimmy in any way for his misbehavior. Furthermore, neither the

teacher nor the counselor would involve themselves in a debate or power struggle with Jimmy. If Jimmy refused to report to the "time-out" room, he would be carried there by the principal. Visits to the "time-out" room would be from 30 to 60 minutes in length.

Jimmy enjoyed his first visit to the "time-out" room. His second and third visits, which were longer in length failed to hold Jimmy's high interest. By the end of the twelfth school day, Jimmy was able to spend his first full day in class without at least one visit to the "time-out" room. The teacher praised him for his change in behavior and put him in charge of the milk break. The counselor had won two ardent fans from the teaching ranks: Jimmy's teacher and Jimmy's mother--who was also a teacher in the same shcool!

Case No. 2:

Case No. 2 involves an entire eighth grade mathematics class. Frequently, elementary school counselors in Tennessee are required to work with students in grades one through eight. The problem with this math class centered on school failure. The fact that 14 of the 21 students in the class had made failing grades for the first grading period led the teacher to request the counselor's counsultation assistance. Two group counseling sessions with the class revealed that the students were unsure of what they had to do to succeed in the math class. In fact, some of the students were not even able to name the basic assignments, - much less able to assign - correct grade values to each task. It was agreed by the students, therefore, that both the class assignments and ways of passing the course needed clarification. The counselor's suggestion of writing grade contracts

for each student was accepted by the class and the teacher on a trial six-weeks basis. All students, except one, contracted for their own grades and assignments. Rather startling changes occurred during the next grading period. Seventeen of the twenty-one students raised their math grades for an overall 43 grade letter increase (e.g. increasing a grade from 'F' to 'B' would represent a three-letter increase). The failure rate decreased from 14 to three. Four students failed to meet their contract terms and received the grade they earned instead. Three students actually surpassed their contracted grade and also received the grade they earned.

Several happenings probably influenced the successful outcome of the study. The teacher changed her behavior and developed clear-cut objectives for the course. In addition, she raised her expectations for student performance and in doing so possibly communicated to the students a desire to help them. The students now had a personal stake in their education and eagerly grasped the opportunity to behave responsibly. They were more or less entrusted with their own education in that they were able to select their assignments and establish their own goals.

Case No. 3:

Dale was described as an eleven-year-old boy in the fourth grade who had never been a discipline problem. He seldom smiled or talked. Nobody chose Dale on a classroom sociometric test. He did little in the way of either positive or negative behavior to attract attention. As far as the teacher was concerned, Dale's only problem was that he missed approximately four out of every seven school days

The principal asked the counselor what could be done about Dale's attendance problem. The counselor agreed that it would be well to attack one problem at a time and that if school became for Dale an enjoyable place to be, many of his withdrawal behaviors would cease. The school principal was very popular among the school children and as such could give significant personal help to Dale. When the counselor asked him how much time he could give to Dale, the principal laughed and said he was too busy to talk with the children and besides it was the counselor's job to handle counseling. The counselor asked the principal if he could spare ten seconds a day for Dale. Flattered by obvious high value the counselor placed on his time, the principal agreed to spend ten seconds a day talking with Dale. Sometimes the daily ten seconds came at the end of the school day with the principal shouting good-bye to Dale from his office window. More frequently the daily meeting came in the hallway where Dale was singled out from other students for special consideration from the principal. The technique produced several positive results. Dale missed only one out of the following 30 school days. The one absence came when he was taken out of school to work for his father. A second classroom sociometric test indicated four choices for Dale. People were beginning to notice that he was smiling and participating in class. A final note, the principal occasionally spent more than 10 seconds per day with Dale.

IV. Discussion:

Elementary school teachers do need consultant assistance from the counselor on specialized pupil problems involving misbehavior, learning, and personal-social concerns. The counselor must be aware of the dynamics of behavior change and be able to apply these principles where they are needed. Most of all,

counselors need to utilize a common sense approach to the analysis of child behavior. Behavior must first be described and then evaluated for its payoff value in meeting identified child needs.

The three cases described represent problems in misbehavior, learning, and person-social adjustment. The remediation techniques employed were designed to extinguish "undesirable" behaviors and replace them with productive modes of functioning. While the paper has focused on behavior change, the intent was not to neglect the importance of the relationship between counselor-student, teacher-student, and counselor-teacher. Building a trusting relationship is requisite to any interpersonal "helping" istuation (Thompson and Poppen, 1969). In many cases the establishment of a sincere, caring relationship between counselor and pupil is sufficient to alter behavior. Such was the case between Dale and his principal. However, counselor strategies become helpful when the child is blocked in his attempts to learn new ways of meeting his needs.

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